



the recipient will be unable to delete the record from the central depository prior to the end of the minimum time period.

C2 2. [Once Amended] The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of purging the electronic record comprising the steps of deleting the electronic record and selectively deleting the at least one electronic tag.

4. [Once Amended] The method of claim 1, wherein the sending step further comprises the step of selectively determining whether the recipient may purge the electronic record.

C3 5. [Once Amended] The method of claim 1, wherein the distributed computing environment comprises computers having a registry and a user profile, wherein the creating step comprises the steps of:

analyzing a network user's workstation specifications;

analyzing a network user's user profile;

generating a reference code; and

wherein the electronic tag is generated from information analyzed in at least one of the network user's workstation, the network user's user profile, and the reference code.

6. [Once Amended] The method of claim 1, wherein the creating step further comprises the steps of:

reading the stored electronic tags; and

generating a further electronic tag in response to accessing an electronic record.

C4 10. [Once Amended] The method of claim 8, wherein the index code identifies the contents of the electronic record and the sender or recipient of the electronic record.

12. [Once Amended] The method of claim 1, wherein the sending step comprises the steps of:

C5 reading the electronic tag; and

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generating a new electronic tag based on the electronic tag, wherein the generating step comprises the steps of reading a network user's workstation specifications, reading a network user's user profile, and generating a reference code.

06
13. [Third Amendment] In a distributed computing environment, an apparatus for managing an electronic record for compliance with a retention policy of an organization, the apparatus comprising:

a computer system comprising at least one processor and at least one memory, the computer system being adapted and arranged for:

creating an electronic tag that uniquely identifies the electronic record, the tag having at least one field for characterizing the record;

storing the at least one electronic tag in a central repository;

sending the electronic record to a recipient; and

wherein:

at least one of the steps of creating and storing ensure maintenance of the characterized record for a minimum time period based on the retention policy; and

the recipient will be unable to delete the record from the central depository prior to the end of the minimum time period.

14. [Once Amended] The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the computer system is further adapted and arranged for purging the electronic record wherein the computer system deletes the electronic record and selectively deletes the at least one electronic tag.

15. [Once Amended] The [method] apparatus of claim 13, wherein the computer system is further adapted and arranged for selectively determining whether the recipient may purge the electronic record.

16. [Once Amended] The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the distributed computing environment comprises computers having a registry and a user profile, wherein the computer system is configured and arranged for:

analyzing a network user's workstation specifications;

C17
analyzing a network user's user profile; and
generating a reference code, wherein the electronic tag is generated from information analyzed in at least one of the network user's workstation, the network user's user profile, and the reference code.

C18
17. [Third Amendment] In a distributed computing environment, an article of manufacture for managing an electronic record for compliance with a retention policy of an organization, the article of manufacture comprising a computer-readable storage medium having a computer program embodied therein that causes the computer network to perform the steps of:

creating an electronic tag that identifies the electronic record, the tag having at least one field for characterizing the record;
storing the at least one electronic tag in a central repository;
sending the electronic record to a recipient; and
wherein:
at least one of the steps of creating and storing ensure maintenance of the characterized record for a minimum time period based on the retention policy; and
the recipient will be unable to delete the record from the central depository prior to the end of the minimum time period.

C9
18. [Once Amended] The article of claim 17, further comprising the step of purging the electronic record comprising the steps of deleting the electronic record and selectively deleting the at least one electronic tag.

20. [Once Amended] The article of claim 17, wherein the sending step further comprises the step of selectively determining whether the recipient may purge the electronic record.

C10
21. [Once Amended] The article of claim 17, wherein the distributed computing environment comprises computers having a registry and a user profile, wherein the creating step comprises the steps of:

analyzing a network user's workstation specifications;
analyzing a network user's user profile; and
generating a reference code, wherein the electronic tag is generated from information
analyzed in the network user's workstation, the network user's user profile, and the reference
code.

22. [Once Amended] The article of claim 17, wherein the creating step further
comprises the steps of:

reading the stored electronic tags; and
generating a further electronic tag in response to accessing an electronic record.
